

SEPTEMBER 2026

IN TOUCH

£1



Otley Parish
CHURCH

Key Information

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Revd. Aaron Kennedy

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CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

Sarah McCormack

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OFFICE HOURS

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CHURCH WEBSITE

www.otleyparishchurch.org

*see our website for details of Church services
and a link to our streamed services on YouTube*

FACEBOOK: @otleyparishchurch

X (TWITTER): @otleyallsaints

CHURCH BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS

Account name: Parochial Church Council of Otley

Account No: 10088811 **Sort code:** 20-37-13

Gift Aid: *if you are a tax payer, please consider signing a Gift Aid declaration which is available on the Church website or from the Treasurer, Tony Pike.*

IN TOUCH

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Our Vision

Otley Parish Church
is:

***“A Place
for Everyone,
with Christ
at the Centre”***

Our vision as a church
is to see the healing,
grace and salvation of
God come to the town
of Otley and beyond!
We believe that with
Christ at the centre of
our personal, family
and church life, we will
see his Kingdom come
in the world around us.

All are welcome!

Otley Parish Church

Kirkgate ● Otley ● West Yorkshire ● LS21 3HW

Vicar:

Reverend Aaron Kennedy

Registered Charity Number 1153498

DEAR FRIENDS

Letter from Aaron



A Fresh Sense of Purpose

As we enter September and the beginning of a new school term, we can feel that we have something like a fresh start. After the slower rhythms of summer, holidays and hopefully some rest, the start of autumn brings the possibility to reset and refocus. New classes, new routines, new opportunities, and re-engaging with established commitments. And I wonder whether this is a helpful moment for us, as a church, to pause and ask: *what is our purpose? What are we here for?*

One of the things that has encouraged me greatly recently is a growing desire to see the Church revived and the glory of God revealed for more people to see. It is a truism of historical revivals that *God comes where he's wanted*. I wonder what it would look like for us as a Church to make Jesus welcome; to truly live into our identity as a Church with Christ at the centre?

The analogy I would offer is of a windmill. A windmill cannot control the wind. It cannot make the wind

blow. But it stands ready to receive the power of the wind whenever it should come. In fact, the windmill is completely devoted to this task. All its design features are a reflection of this purpose. The wind of the Spirit does indeed blow wherever it wills. But if we're not devoted to receiving its power, if we're not devoted to that purpose, and standing in readiness for it, we'll miss it. The windmill has sails that must be in good working order for the power of the wind to translate into the fulfilment of the windmill's purpose – grinding grain.

And that leads me to a second connection. If we have sin in our lives – ongoing, unrepentant sin – that surely is the equivalent of our sails being damaged, or some of the internal mechanics of the windmill being broken. Of course, we all fail. We all fall into sin at different times. But that is not the same as knowingly living in ways that we know offend our Holy God. Sin

hobbles our ability to respond to the Holy Spirit, and it can cause us to fall asleep spiritually. If we allow this to happen, we will likewise miss the movement of the Holy Spirit and fail to fulfil God's purpose for our lives.

Finally, a windmill needs grain. It needs to be in contact with the purpose for which it was designed. If the wind blows, and the sails turn, but there is no grain on the grinding surface, the windmill again fails to fulfil its purpose. Likewise, with us. If we are not consciously engaged in the tasks God has given us, we may fail to fulfil our purpose. The wind may blow, but if we're not at our post, how can we be a part of what wants to do through us?

God's call on our lives is both *general and specific*. Generally, we are all called to go and make disciples of those we meet, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded us. Specifically, we each have particular talents with which to serve God – and particular contexts in which he has placed us: our families, places of employment, friendships and communities.

So, as we begin this new term, I want to invite us to consider our purpose. Are we consciously devoted to the Lord Jesus? Have we arranged our lives to attend to his Spirit, to make him our singular focus, our 'one thing' (Psalm 27)?

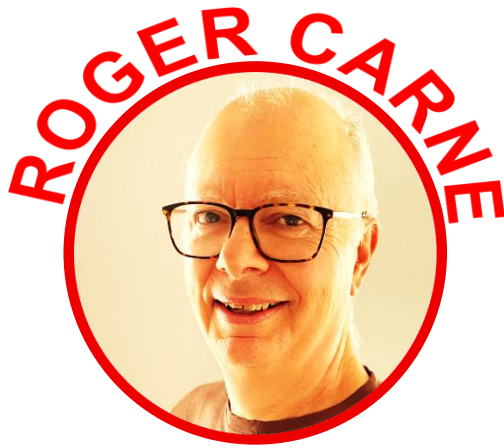
Secondly, let's ask him to search our hearts, and where there is sin, let's be quick to repent and receive his forgiveness. Let's make sure our sails are in good working order.

And thirdly, let's renew our commitment to get ourselves into contact with the grain! Let's look around us and ask: What talents has God given me and how can I use them to serve his Kingdom? Where has God placed me? Who has he put around me? Who can I serve? Who can I encourage? Who might I invite to discover Jesus?

Let's endeavour afresh to be a Church that is awake and alert, and ready when the wind of the Spirit blows.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron', with a large, stylized capital 'A' at the beginning.

AARON KENNEDY – Vicar at Otley Parish Church



Hello Roger, and thank you so much for joining us here “In the Hot Seat”. Many of us know you by sight but may not really know much about you, so it will be lovely to read more about you now.

When were you born and where did you grow up?

I was born in 1957 and spent my first 18 years in a very small hamlet in Cornwall.

Where did you go to school?

I went to a very small primary school in a village about 2 miles from my home. I was taught by the same teacher who had taught my father! After primary, I went to Launceston College, a secondary school 6 miles from home.

Did you go to College or University? If so, where?

I crossed the border into Devon to Plymouth Polytechnic.

When and where did you meet your wife, Penny?

We met in 1981 at the City Temple, a United Reformed Church on Holborn Viaduct in central London, as we had both separately moved to London for our training.

What was your occupation and

where did you work?

I trained as an accountant and worked in 3 different accountancy practices for 40 years until I retired in 2020. I still do a bit of business consultancy work.

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

I'm the oldest of 5. I have 3 sisters and 1 brother.

How many children do you have, what are their names and how old they?

We have James and Beth who are just over and under 40.

Why did you come to live here in Otley?

James and his wife and 2 sons live here in Otley. Penny's elderly Mum lives in Derbyshire. She needs increasing amounts of assistance and being here means we can visit her much more frequently. It was over a four-hour journey when we lived in Devon.

When did you become a Christian?

In 1978. I worked for a year in central London as part of my degree. I lived in the YMCA at the Barbican which was a hostel for young people who had moved to work/study in London. I met some people who became friends who took me to St Helen's Bishopsgate. Revd. Dick Lucas

was a great bible teacher, and I discovered the gospel message for the first time.

Did you worship anywhere before coming to Otley Parish Church? How long have you been coming here?

I was involved in Silverton Evangelical Church in a village in Devon for 34 years before moving here in October last year.

Are you involved in any way here at OPC?

I have been a helper in the last 2 Alpha courses.

Do you have a favourite verse of Scripture? If so, what is it?

I hope I am allowed 2 which have lived with me most of my Christian life. The first is Isaiah 41:10 which so clearly states how God is with us. The second is the challenge of our response of service in 2 Corinthians 4:5.

Do you have a favourite Christian hymn or song?

There are many, both old and modern. I don't have a favourite.

What about modern songs or music – anything in particular?

I like lots of pop/rock music, but I am a "child of the 70s" and many of those bands and artists such as the Rolling Stones and Elton John are still around.

Do you have a favourite part of Yorkshire that you like to visit?

I love the Dales but also really enjoy Otley, especially being by the river.

Is there somewhere you would like to go on holiday where you've not been before, regardless of expense?

Australia to watch a cricket test series, accepting we will lose!!

A book you enjoyed reading – Christian or general? Any special reason?

In recent years I have increasingly enjoyed reading the bible as I discover and understand the amazing overall story from creation through Jesus to our hope of the new creation at the end.

Do you have a hobby or something you enjoy doing to relax?

I enjoy most sports but my body creaks too much now so I am restricted to only watching. A lifelong ardent Plymouth Argyle fan, I enjoy watching my team play football, and am starting to explore the Division 1 football grounds of the North when Plymouth are “up this way”.

What would be your favourite meal – 2 or even 3 courses?

Beef wellington with any pudding to follow (perhaps a sticky toffee).

If you were to spend a whole year on a desert island on your own, what luxury would you take with you?

An enormous battery to power the equipment which would play recordings from my family and friends.

Which one word best describes your life right now?

Thankful.

Have YOU been “In the Hot Seat”?

If you haven't been in it yet, we would love you to be in it very soon.

For those here at church who don't know you very well, it's a great and interesting way of finding out more about you.

If you would like to be in it, please contact our In Touch Editor,

Stephen Hey: editor@otleyparishchurch.org

and let him know you're interested.

He will then send you a list of the standard questions for you to answer.

We're happy for you to add extra questions, or even remove one or two!



Community Festival of Song

OTLEY, WEST YORKSHIRE

THANK YOU for all your support at Otley Parish Church for the very successful "*Second Big Otley Sings Concert*" held on Saturday 27th June. The afternoon was a sell-out and brought together choirs, musicians and solo recording artists for a community celebration of the town's musical talent, all in one of Otley's most atmospheric venues, with about 400 people attending.

Kicking off was the Otley Parish Church Choir singing Andrew Lloyd Webber numbers, followed by the amazing children from 'Inspirations' junior choir. This set the tone for a fantastic afternoon, and it was brilliant to see the church packed out.

The money raised was £3,000 which was shared between the *Yorkshire Air Ambulance* charity, and the *Otley Parish Church Roof Appeal*.

Thanks to the church ladies serving teas, coffees and cakes, and to everybody else who contributed in one way or another to make the concert afternoon a great success.

If you didn't get chance to go this year, it's definitely one for your diary in 2027!

Reid Haddow

Organiser of the 2nd Big Otley Sings Concert - and a member of Otley Parish Church.

Second Big Otley Sings Concert 2026

— Featuring —

- 🎵 Otley Parish Church Choir
- 🎵 Junior Inspirational Choir
- 🎵 The Chippendale Singers
- 🎵 Northern Heart Trio
- 🎵 Rock and Pop Choir Otley

- 🎵 Joe Reed
- 🎵 Silvertones Choir
(Wings Academy)
- 🎵 Terrie Ford & Melody Reed
- 🎵 SingMeanwood!
- 🎵 Music Box –
Inspiring Voices CIC
- 🎵 Sally's Army



'Inspirations' junior choir performing at Otley Sings Concert



Otley Parish Church Choir performing at Otley Sings Concert



FAMILY NEWS

AT OTLEY PARISH CHURCH



George Henry Evans

**Congratulations Jo and Michael on the birth of George Henry.
He was born in Harrogate Hospital on Sunday 5th July 2026
at 8.47am, and weighed 8lbs 0oz.**

**In the right hand picture, George is with his sister
Grace Elizabeth. She was born on 27th November 2024.**



SHEILA SIMPSON

celebrated her 100th birthday on 29th June 2026

Sheila was born in Otley in 1926 and has lived here ever since. She went to North Parade Infant School, and then to the National School (linked to the Church of England) in Cross Green, Otley, for 10 years. Very sadly her husband, Harold, died 3 years ago on 24th October 2023 at the grand old age of 103. Sheila and Harold were married in Guiseley on 23rd July 1949, 77 years ago!



AMANDA CAIN

celebrated her 55th birthday on
Monday 13th July.

She was born in Adelaide, Australia in 1971.



CONGRATULATIONS

**VERY
WELL
DONE
ANNA**

Anna Lolashvili obtained a 1st Class Bachelor of Science degree this year in Computer Science at Lancaster University.

**She is seen here on the day of her graduation in July.
This September she will start her PGCE training to teach
computer science in secondary schools.**

CLIFFORD PORTER

*Cliff very sadly died
on 20th June 2026
at the age of 88.
He is seen here at
Dolphin Manor
Care Home in
Rothwell, Leeds,
just 5 weeks before
he passed away in
hospital.*



*This photo
of Cliff
with his
wife Carol
was taken 3
years ago
when he
was 85 and
she was 80.
Carol is
now 83
years old.*



VOTE NOW for VIOLET!



Leeds Children's Mayor Elections

Every year, children and young people in Leeds elect their new Children's Mayor. If you're 18 years old or younger and live or go to school in Leeds, please scan the QR code or visit the blue link below, read the entries and cast your democratic vote for Violet l'Anson!



Violet l'Anson



Violet l'Anson with brother Johnny

<https://surveys.leeds.gov.uk/s/LCMVoting2026/>



● **Voting is open until 5pm on Monday 25th September** ●



A FEW MONTHS AGO, Violet, daughter of Sarah and Lee, entered a competition to become Leeds Children's Mayor.

She wrote a beautiful manifesto about how Leeds City Council can improve SEND provision (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), inspired of course by her little brother Johnny who is autistic. Violet wrote about the awesome charities that support us, difficulties with funding, access and waiting times.

The voting opened in July and closes on 25th September at 5pm. Providing you are 18 years old or younger and have a Leeds postcode, you can vote. We met the other 11 finalists in the Civic Hall in July and they are all fantastic. Each wrote about things that they were passionate for, including tackling child poverty, safer places for children to play and helping our environment.

All the entries are online – you have 2 votes – please do go online and vote. Violet's school in Otley is Ashfield Primary. *See the voting link in blue on the previous page.*

Violet will always be a winner – saying we are proud doesn't even come close – she gets more out of Johnny than Lee or myself, or than any professional ever has. I know she has friends in church, so I just wanted to share this with you all.

Sarah McCormack

60 Years... and Counting



Pam Beck



HAVING COMPLETED MY SCHOOLING

at Prince Henry's Grammar School in 1966, and obtaining my ALCM Diploma (Associate of the London College of Music), I was preparing to leave home to attend St. John's C. of E. Teacher Training College in York.

I had been having organ lessons for 3 years with Otley Parish Church organist Godfrey Turner, and I had been playing for some services and occasional funerals and weddings for some time as required by my

teacher, because the Assistant Organist, Colin Marston, lived away and was only occasionally in Otley. In the middle of August 1966, he got married and moved away permanently, so I was officially appointed Assistant Organist. I continued to play here during my holidays from college, and on more than one occasion I received an urgent request to come home for the weekend to play because Godfrey Turner was ill!

When I returned home to start school teaching, I played a fuller part with the large church choir of 26 boys and 15 men until January 1970 when I was required to take over, as Godfrey Turner had left Otley. In those days, the organist played for 3 services on a Sunday: 9.30am Family Service, 10.45am Sung Eucharist or Matins, and 6pm Evensong. On Easter Day that year I played hymns at the 8am Communion Service (this happened only on special festivals), 9.30am Family Service, 10.45am Choral Service, 2.30pm Sunday Schools' Easter Service in church and 6pm Evensong! That was the first of 7 "interregnums" that I have covered after each of the organists has moved on, and at least one of these extended to well over a year. Organists are not easy to find.

As my father was a member of the choir for over 70 years, from boy soprano to bass, and my brother and both our sons sang as boys and young men, the Parish Church Choir has always been part of my life. In addition to the services and weekly choir practices, I was involved with taking the choir to sing in country churches where they did not have their own choir; the annual choir trip when we always sang Evensong in a church near our destination attracting parishioners from that church to come to the Saturday service; choir dinners, which included more informal musical entertainment, and a week's choirboys camp at Withernsea with Canon Clayton (and my husband Tony) in 1974 when I was pregnant with our first baby. I also held choir-boys Christmas parties at our house for a number of years and, for a time when Bob Walker was our organist, we had a choir club on a Wednesday straight from school, when I cooked the choirboys tea and we had some leisure activities and with an additional boys only practice in the old Burras Lane School. I have played the organ for services at a number of different churches in the area over the years and filled in for several months at St Oswald's Church when we lived in Guiseley in the 1970s.

Although we do not currently have any children in the choir, we have a loyal and very able group of adult singers who are able to contribute to our worship at the church festivals and to visit residential homes in the area to entertain the residents. Also, in the past 2 years, we have prepared more secular music to perform at the "Otley Sings" concerts in June.

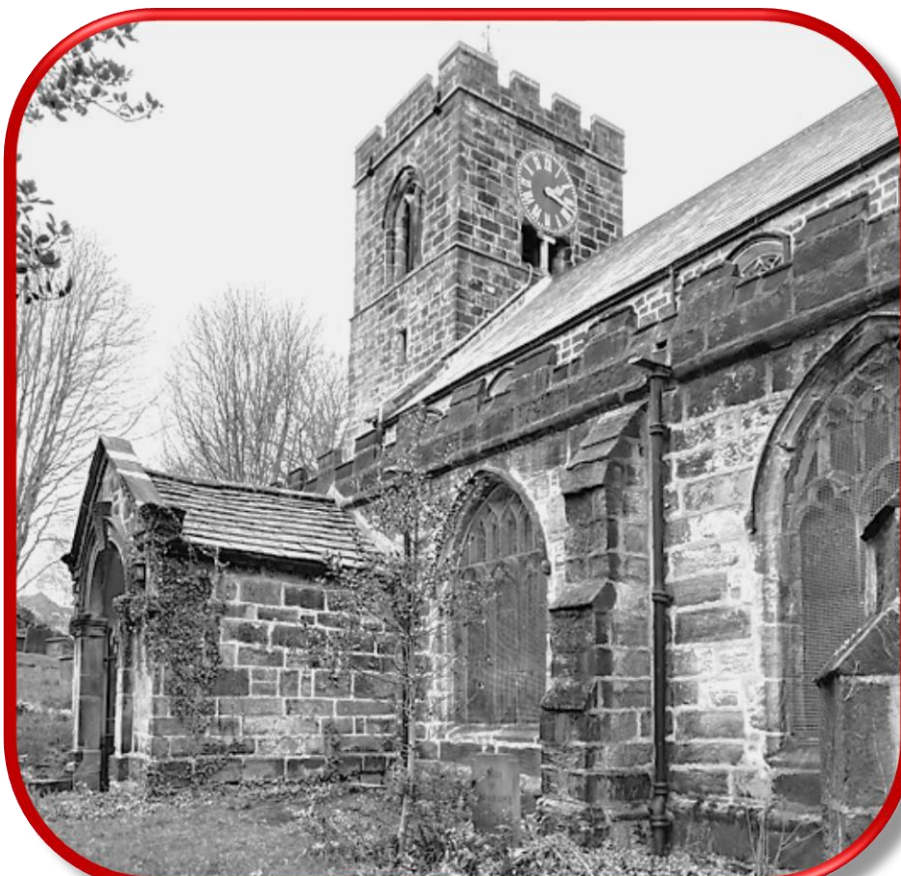
So, reflecting back over the past 60 years and the six vicars and eight organists that I have been associated with, I realise how much the gift of music has enriched our worship – and my life. I hope we will continue to "make a joyful (and tuneful) noise" to the glory of God.



**Pam Beck playing the organ in the early 1960s.
She is with her younger brother Tony.**

ACTIVATE

Lively / Informal / Reflective



ACTIVATE started at Otley Parish Church around 16 years ago as an informal worship service for members of our own church and for members of other local churches too.

ACTIVATE takes place on the first Sunday of every month, given the exception of some other times in the year such as August and Christmas where OPC has a busy schedule.

The main format of the service consists of worship songs, a reflection, and a time for the congregation to contribute what they have learned from the time of reflection. It's a real blessing and encouraging to hear what people say. There is also opportunity for open prayer as the Holy Spirit leads, and sometimes there's a short time of quiet personal prayer.

The worship songs are chosen by the worship leader and are usually the theme of what the reflection will be about. The music is lively, uplifting and quiet at times throughout the service with a mixture of different songs for everyone to enjoy and focus on what the words are saying. The worship time is usually split up in between the reflection which is given by the leader so that there can be small breaks from singing.

ACTIVATE is more of an 'adult' focussed service but children are very welcome to join us if they enjoy singing and listening to what's being said. It's often good to see younger people participating in the singing and hearing what God has to say. The service normally lasts for one hour, but it has been known to go over time slightly which is good, as sometimes there might be an extra song or prayer to conclude the service.

ACTIVATE attendance varies but it is very encouraging to have both regular and different people come along each month – not only OPC members but visitors from other churches and the local community too. We encourage people not only to attend **ACTIVATE** but to start coming along to OPC if that person maybe starting out in their faith.

If you are interested in coming to **ACTIVATE** then please come along to see for yourself what it's like and maybe bring someone else with you. We always love to welcome new people. After the service there are refreshments including pizza for everyone to enjoy and to have a friendly chat together.

RACHEL CHAMBERLAIN who wrote this is a member of Holborn Church in Woodhouse, Leeds, but sings in our **ACTIVATE** worship team each month.

● *Shortly after this article was written it was announced that ACTIVATE will be put on hold for a period of time because of a shortage of leaders. Hopefully, and it's certainly something to pray about, it won't be too long before it can start again.*

What's Your Favourite Hymn?



“Thine Be the Glory”

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave clothes where thy body lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness songs of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.

Thine be the glory...

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

Thine be the glory...

Author: Swiss Protestant Minister: Edmond Budry (1854-1932)
English Translator: Richard Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)

NORMAN BARR

tells us why this is his favourite hymn

There are several reasons why this hymn is one of my favourites despite the use of the archaic words 'Thine', 'Thou' and 'Thy'. I am sure someone has tried to modernise it but most of us would automatically revert to the original version.

It is a favourite hymn at Easter because it so clearly rejoices in 'a Risen Jesus' and the fact that He has conquered death, that He meets with us and that He journeys with us in the struggles of life.

This hymn was sung at my mother's funeral when she died aged 73 after a six month battle with cancer. I remember my dad, who had nursed her in her dying months singing so enthusiastically, and I knew that

the words of the hymn were giving him strength.

Twenty years later the same hymn was sung at my dad's funeral, and his three sons and their families also sang with gusto as we knew he had finished his journey of faith.

As with many hymns, they remind us of favourite verses of scripture and the verses for me are Romans 8:38-39:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Do YOU have a favourite hymn?

We would love to know what yours is. If you would like to tell us, please contact our In Touch Editor - Stephen Hey stephenhey01@gmail.com and let him know you're interested. He will then send you a few simple guidelines to help you.

My Favourite Bible Verse

Allan Boddy



The King will reply: ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’.

(Matthew 25:40 NIV)

Every Sunday I sit with our singers in Church and spend a lot of time looking at the window in the north transept and thinking about the message that it conveys to me from Matthew 25:31-43 – the Matthew Challenge.

My favourite verse within these is Matthew 25:40. For me, this verse and the rest of the passage have the really powerful message that what I do or don’t do to other people, I am doing or not doing to Jesus. If I show kindness to others, I am showing kindness to Jesus. If I am cruel to others, I am being cruel to Jesus. If I fail to do what I can for people in difficulties, I am failing Jesus.

This is a standard of behaviour hard to achieve all the time, but it is a standard to aim for and by which we can judge how we are living our lives.

PRAYER IDEAS *for* **EVERYDAY CHRISTIANS**

John Simkins

Introduction

Church history shows us that there have been times when a sense of the need to pray has come upon the 'wider church' and the outcomes are well recorded. These have been the most effective when 'ordinary' Christians have taken up God's call: 'people movements'.

In recent years, again, there has been a strong emphasis on the need for the church to rediscover prayer.

Prayer is something for all Christians to be engaged in, and a normative part of their life.

My hope in writing this is to encourage every Christian to embrace prayer as a natural part of daily life; knowing 'God with us' and praying for others we connect with.

I first wrote this in 2013 in response to a request from a leaders' training programme in Devon to speak on prayer. We were about to move from Exeter to Yorkshire. For several years we had been involved in connecting with Christians in the city and helping to steer some united prayer. This is what shaped the substance of what follows, together with some editing after helpful comments from others.

John Simkins
Otley Parish Church

Prayer Ideas for Everyday Christians
is a book of eleven chapters
each of which will feature in future editions of In Touch



9. Prayer as engaging with God's heart

Continued from the June In Touch

Watch and pray

You will be familiar with this phrase '*watch and pray*' from Jesus' own teaching [Matthew 26:41; Luke 21:36]

The apostle Paul writes, '*devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*' [Colossians 4:2]

This can mean being aware of the times we live in; also, the need to be observant, to resist temptation and to be alert to the spiritual issues that lie at the backdrop of the lives we live.

PRAYING WITH EYES OPEN

Praying with eyes open in prayer meetings is not what I mean! How many of us have tried hard to avoid being noticed when we peep to see if anyone else is peeping and a prayer meeting is about to finish!

- ❖ Praying as we walk: This clearly requires us to have our eyes open! Look around and pray for what you see when you are out and about.
 - ❖ Prayer walking: This is more intentional - a set-aside time to walk and focus on praying, or a 'prayer run'! Why not a 'prayer cycle ride'!? In this way we may pray for a place or particular spheres of life represented in what we pass by. We may worship as we go. We may do this alone or with others.
- God said, in Joshua 1:3, '*I will give you every place where you set your foot*'. I think that this purposeful physical presence of God's people in places both brings God's presence and is a spiritual challenge to the 'enemy'.
- ❖ In a metaphorical sense 'having our eyes open' can also mean keeping in touch with what is going on - maybe through media or our own research. These might suggest things that we should pray about.

PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Stand therefore... praying always with all prayer... [Ephesians 6:11-18 NKJV]

This is more to do with what Paul calls *the eyes of your heart* [Ephesians 1:18]; gaining some insight into what's going on in the more invisible realms.

Being pastoral for others means being alert. Sometimes people are led to pray in a kind of battling mode. A Biblical example of this is Daniel in the Old Testament. Jesus himself and the church in Acts were also clearly 'up against' spiritual things contrary to God.

I recommend Lesslie Newbigin's book, 'The Gospel in a Pluralist Society'. [SPCK 1989]. In chapter 16 he talks about 'Principalities, Powers and People'. He tackles admirably the way in which spiritual authorities interact with flesh and blood structures. Here are a couple of quotations:

"The principalities and powers are real. They are invisible and we cannot locate them in space. They do not exist as disembodied entities

floating above this world, or lurking within it. They meet us as embodied in visible and tangible realities – people, nations, and institutions. And they are powerful.”

He does not say that all authorities in the spiritual realm are bad but clearly recognises that they may be. Conflict may be needed along the lines of Ephesians 6.

“The idea that the gospel is addressed only to the individual and that it is only indirectly addressed to societies, nations, and cultures is simply an illusion of our individualistic post-Enlightenment Western culture.”

There are some issues where solitariness or isolation can never ‘carry the day’. Those who assume they have authority, believing that on their own they can do what only unity can do, are unwise. If the Body of Christ in a particular locality is to see spiritual change, societal transformation and conditions where people will be responsive to the gospel, there will need to be a measure of united prayer.

There are many historical precedents for this. I like the idea of a ‘spiritual quorum’ – sufficient agreed and prayerful representation of the wider church to be effective in overcoming and advancing; an opening of the way for the renewing and redeeming presence of God.

*His intent was that now, **through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. [Ephesians 3:10]*

Here is Paul’s somewhat mysterious concept of the church corporate having a calling to, in some way, have an influence in these invisible realms.

Together we may pray with the prophet Isaiah:

Look down from heaven and see - - rend the heavens and come down. [Isaiah 63:15 & 64]

I recognise that this may be a subject for the more mature, but it would be incomplete to neglect it. Pastorally, for people we deal with in life or church, or personally at difficult times in our own lives or families, there will be seasons where the only explanation that seems realistic is that we are spiritually ‘up against it’. We need to train ourselves and others:

Blessed be the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle. [Psalm 144:1]

Fear...
Lies...
Despair...

TRIUMPH!

by **LESLEY NOBLE**



Introduction

I was born in 1949 and had a poor childhood filled mainly with fear, lies, loneliness and despair, which impacted my life in a negative way for the first forty years. Then, between 1991 and 1993 my healing process began.

I feel the need to tell my story with the hope that anyone reading it may be encouraged if they ever thought things would never get better for them in their own lives.

I found it very therapeutic when starting to write this book. One of the main wonderful things is that, in the end, I know that for all my past I've not only been forgiven, but I have also learned to forgive.

A STORY TO BE TOLD... TO ENCOURAGE... ALL IS WELL



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Tears & Fears

I WAS VERY FORTUNATE to be able to stay in Canada for another two years, just coming back to England once to see family. Sadly, during the time I was over there, both my Aunt Margaret (dad's sister) had passed away, also Uncle George, husband of Dorothy (dad's other sister) had also died of cancer. It was hard seeing my dad so hurt as he was very close to both of them.

Little did I know that my time in Canada was running out! We were getting no further with Manpower. Tony told them he was doing specialised work, and the company backed him, but they replied, we are allowed to stay one year in order to teach a Canadian how to do that job then we would have to leave. I was gutted, as no doubt I could have stayed there longer, under the radar, but that would have made me an illegal immigrant, and I needed to have 'roots' especially as my marriage was still surface only, so I had to see how that would pan out! I had my 30th birthday in Canada surrounded by the most wonderful friends in the "Big Reds" fish restaurant in the country I loved. Shirley and I hugged and cried but I was determined to return as often as possible.

We arrived back in England in 1979 with nowhere to live. I didn't want to stay at mam and dad's house, so we moved in next door with Mrs Bland as lodgers for a while. We had no trouble finding work. I went back into upholstery and Tony started work as a wagon driver. We moved on to rent various council houses in the Leeds area. In the first house in Seacroft, thieves broke in on Boxing Day and stole everything of value, including clothes and electrical goods. Thankfully, our cat had the sense to hide under the bed so he was safe. We moved on to a maisonette on Stanks Drive near Swarcliffe, but this was not a good time in my life. All the resentment, frustration, and anger returned. I felt trapped.

Then my brother, Dave, bought a very large house on Stanningley Road so we moved in there and I decided to have a go at running a bed and breakfast - 'Pro digs' catering mainly for individual entertainers, touring groups, bands etc. I gave up my job, and managed to run it myself so Tony kept his job on. Thankfully a group of workers from the oil rigs up north checked in. About 8 of them stayed regularly so that was a steady income for a long time, busy but enjoyable. Tony and I basically lived separate lives under the same roof.

Then Tony took a job as a caretaker and a house on Dewsbury Road was included, so we moved again. My brother Dave encouraged me to take some driving lessons alongside him teaching me in his car. It wasn't something I had thought about, but on reflection it would give me more freedom to control my own life. My younger brother Ricky found me a V.W. Beetle to practice in.



Lesley with her best friend, Penny

Once again, I went back to work at Bridgecraft Upholstery on Mabgate. Homelife was unhappy to say the least, and I began contemplating leaving once again. During the next few months, we already had two cats, but one day whilst visiting a friend of a friend, I was appalled to see her beat her starving dog for stealing butter from the table. This poor dog was emaciated and suffering, so I aggressively intervened and said, "Give her to me if you don't want her", so she did! I took hold of Penny's lead, and walked out of that house with this neglected dog, who then became my best friend!! Penny was ten, but her final 3 or 4 years were filled with love and safety. She became my joy at the time we needed each other the most.

The time came for me to make the break. I couldn't live like this anymore. Tony was a jealous person and I felt like property, so one evening in 1982 I told him we should have a trial separation, and I would go back home for a while. He went berserk! Accusations! Threats! He would kill anyone who comes near me! Will kill himself. He put his fist through the window and smashed the glass. He never hit me, but the ferocity of his anger was profound, and I was extremely frightened, but this just confirmed to me that I needed to get out of this relationship as soon as possible. He had calmed down a bit by next morning. I left immediately. All I took from that house was my clothes, my dog and my car. I hadn't passed my test yet, but I drove it away.

My brother Dave, by then had bought a small house in Holbeck which was empty of everything, so we, Penny and I, dossed down there for a while. I went to the public baths for washing and still went to work and took Penny with me. She slept in the car, and I went out at intervals to walk her. I never had much money, certainly not enough for a deposit on a house, so Dave came up with a great idea for me to buy this one. I applied for a mortgage saying the deposit had been paid already, and that worked! So, I acquired my own small back-to-back property that same year. The stress of the separation brought on an instant menopause, so I knew if I did want children in the future there was no chance.

•Chapter 10 of "Fear... Lies... Despair... Triumph!" will be published in the November 2026 edition of In Touch. Previous chapters can either be found on our church website www.otleyparishchurch.org/in-touch or every alternate month starting in March 2025.

Keep in touch with...

IN TOUCH

We would love you to keep in touch and tell us what you would like to see in YOUR monthly Church magazine.

Yes, it is yours!

Please do let us know if you have any suggestions as to how we can make **IN TOUCH** even better than it is already. And let us know if you would like to contribute something.

What about contributing to our popular series of **In the Hot Seat** or **My Favourite Bible Verse** or **An Event that Changed My Life** or **My Devotional Thoughts** or **My Favourite Hymn** or **How I Found My Faith**?

Maybe you'd like to write a poem or a prayer or...

We would also love to hear your family news such as birthdays and anniversaries, or anything interesting; also, to see some of your family photographs.

■ Whatever you would like to share with us please bear in mind that for it to be included in the next edition of **IN TOUCH** we must hear from you no later than:

Saturday

12 September

Please send your articles, thoughts or suggestions to our Editor:

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WHO ARE WE?

OTLEY PARISH CHURCH – the oldest building in Otley – is at the heart of our town and, for over 1,000 years, people have been gathering here for worship and significant family and community events. *“There is a place for everyone, with Christ at the centre of it all.”*

We are a gathering place for pilgrims on a journey of discovery, kindling hope as we go, helping one another to be more fully alive to the wonders, joys and sorrows of life. We'd love you to share the journey with us.

We want to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to Christ and in service to our local community.

Join us in worshipping God together on Sundays and in daily life; be with us as we study and discern how to use the Bible in the 21st century; learn with us what it is to be 21st century disciples following Jesus and help us, with the other churches in the town, to bring good news to Otley and far beyond.



Otley Parish
CHURCH